

America and of Americans and of our families. It is a story of the struggle for freedom, the struggle for democracy, and the struggle for a better life for our families, our friends, and our neighbors.

As we gather in this great Chamber, this cradle of democracy here in these United States, we should never forget the lessons of Greeks and the lessons of Greek independence.

CELEBRATING 180 YEARS OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FERGUSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on March 25, as has been mentioned, Greece celebrates its 180th year of independence. I am here tonight to praise the society that represents, in a historical sense, the origins of what we call Western culture and, in a contemporary sense, one of the staunchest defenders of Western society and values. There are many of us in Congress, on both sides of the spectrum, who are staunchly committed to strengthening and preserving the ties between the Greek and American people. I would particularly like to thank the co-chairs of our Hellenic Caucus, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) and the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY), for their fine leadership and tireless efforts to strengthen the ties between our two countries.

Just 200 years ago, after the Greek people began the revolution that would lead to their freedom, one of our predecessors in this Chamber, Congressman Daniel Webster, referring to the 400 years during which the Greeks were ruled by the Ottoman Empire, observed, and I quote, "These people," the Greeks, "a people of intelligence, ingenuity, refinement, spirit and enterprise, have been for centuries under the atrocious and unparalleled Tartarian barbarism that ever oppressed the human race."

The words Congressman Webster chose then to describe the Greek people, intelligence, ingenuity, refinement, spirit and enterprise, are as apt today as they ever have been. In the years since, Americans and Greeks have grown ever closer, bound by ties of strategic and military alliance, common values of democracy, individual freedom, human rights, and close personal friendship.

In the early 20th century, Greece stood by the United States in World War I when Hitler's war machine decimated Europe in the middle of this century. Greece again stood on the same side of the United States to repulse the greatest threat to freedom and human decency the world as ever seen and, I might add, at great cost to the Greek people and the Greek nation.

□ 1900

History has shown that the historic battle of Crete, in which the indomitable spirit of the Greek people forced Hitler to delay his planned invasion of Russia, was one of the most important battles of the Second World War. From the outset of that war, Greece showed its true character as a nation of courage and honor, devoted to freedom and self-determination.

World War II's aftermath left Europe mired in the Cold War; and Greece, a NATO ally to this day, once again answered the call. Greece showed its national valor and sense of historic mission, joining forces with the United States and preserving and protecting the freedoms enjoyed today by an unprecedented number of the world's people.

The qualities exhibited by the nation of Greece, Mr. Speaker, are a reflection of the strong character and values of its individual citizens. The United States has been greatly enriched as many sons and daughters of Greece made a new life in America. They and their children and grandchildren have enriched our country in countless ways, contributing to our cultural, professional, commercial, academic and political life.

The timeless values of Greek culture have endured for centuries, indeed for millennia. As Daniel Webster noted, 400 years of control by the Ottoman Empire could not overcome the Greek people's determination to be free.

But I regret to say, Mr. Speaker, to this day the Greek people must battle against oppression. For almost 24 years now, Greece has stood firm in its determination to bring freedom and independence to the illegally occupied nation of Cyprus. Like their forefathers who were under the control of a hostile foreign power for four centuries, the Cypriot people hold fast in defiance of their Turkish aggressors with every confidence that they will again be a sovereign nation, and they will.

The United States must be on their side in both the fight to secure that freedom and the celebration to mark the day when it finally arrives.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to congratulate the Greek people for 180 years of independence and thank them for their contributions to American life.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. FERGUSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I would like to switch subjects for a moment to talk about another matter during this month of women's history. As the Republican chair of the Congressional Women's Caucus, I would like to take

the opportunity to discuss an issue that affects thousands of women each year, violence against women.

There are two types of violence against women that need to be addressed: domestic violence and sexual assault. Scratch the surface of any of our Nation's most challenging social problems, from crime in the schools to gang violence and homelessness, and you are likely to find a root cause of domestic violence.

Law enforcement officials are reporting that domestic violence situations are among their most frequent calls. Judges find that children first seen in their courts as victims of domestic violence return later as adult criminal defendants. Schools are noticing that children with emotional problems often come from an environment where violence is the norm.

Violence begets violence, and we must break the cycle. We have begun to address the problem, but there is still much work to be done. Reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act in the 106th Congress was a giant step in the right direction.

Since it passed in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act has been effective. In fact, the Justice Department estimates that violence against women has decreased by 21 percent since the law was originally passed. The law also has been credited with providing shelter space for more than 300,000 women and their families.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my many colleagues here in the House who supported and fought for this important legislation, both in 1994 and the reauthorization last year. I am proud that reauthorization received such strong bipartisan support, and I am hopeful that our future efforts to address this tremendous problem will receive similar levels of support from both sides of the aisle.

The reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act brought much-needed attention to these issues, attention that will be translated into greater public awareness of this issue and a greater public commitment to solving the problems of violence against women.

But another particular area of violence against women that needs more congressional attention is sexual assault. The statistics on this issue are staggering. A rape occurs every 90 seconds, and estimates show that one out of every three women will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime.

Seven out of every 10 rapes are committed by someone the victim knows. Seventy-six percent of the women over 18 who are raped and/or physically assaulted are assaulted by a current or former husband, cohabitating partner or date.

What can we do to address this horrendous problem? We must talk about it. We must raise public awareness. For

years, these problems have been swept under the table, and women have been hesitant about talking about them in public or even reporting them.

I am thankful that this trend is in reverse and the public is becoming more outraged about these heinous crimes against women. We, as leaders, must be willing to bring more attention to the fight against sexual assault and domestic violence.

By focusing public attention on these acts of brutality against women, we can raise public awareness. We can make a difference. We have already seen positive effects of the Violence Against Women Act, but that is just a start.

As the month of March draws to a close, I would like to point out that the month of April is nationally known as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month. I would like to see this designation made official.

Officially designating April as National Sexual Assault Awareness Month would raise public awareness. Violence against women is a large, unrecognized and all-too-often ignored problem in all of our communities. The costs of these violent acts is borne not only by the women who experience it, but by their families, communities and our Nation as a whole.

This is a national issue, and it must receive national attention. We must continue our congressional commitment to making our streets and homes safe for women and children.

A TRIBUTE TO GOVERNOR JOAN FINNEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to convey my thoughts and prayers for the former governor of our State, Governor Joan Finney, and her family. Last month, Governor Finney was diagnosed with liver cancer. I wish her strength and courage as she fights this devastating disease.

Governor Finney has had a long and distinguished career in service to the public. She was a trailblazer for women in elective office, and her example has served as inspiration and a role model for others in our State and around the country.

Joan Finney served our State for 16 years as Kansas Treasurer. She started her career as a Republican and switched to become a Democrat.

In 1990, she became the first woman ever elected governor of our State. Governor Finney is truly a woman of the people.

Throughout her years of public service, she was able to connect to everyday Kansans in a way all of us who hold elective office can respect and admire.

I was privileged to serve in the Kansas Senate during Governor Finney's term as governor. During that time, she always had the well-being of the people of our State as her priority.

While we sometimes disagreed, I always knew where the Governor stood on each and every issue. She was honest and straightforward. No public opinion polls, no focus groups, just Joan Finney doing what she thought was best for the people she loved, the people of Kansas.

Governor Finney was always respectful, and her heart was always in the right place. She believed passionately in her positions and worked hard for the hard-working people of Kansas.

Family is very important to Governor Finney. Members of her family played key roles in her campaigns and in her administration.

I know that her family is with her now as she faces this great challenge. May the strength and goodwill that she displayed in her years as public service now help her defeat this terrible disease.

My thoughts and prayers go out to Governor Finney, to her husband Spencer and to her children, Sally Finney, Richard Finney and Mary Holliday.

Kansans care greatly for you, Mrs. Finney, and we pray God will bless you and give you courage and strength.

AMERICA'S FARMERS AND RANCHERS NEED A NEW FARM BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the 276 million of us who do not work in the farming and ranching sectors need to take time today on National Agriculture Day to give thanks to the 700,000 men and women of American agriculture for all they do to feed our Nation and, indeed, much of the rest of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pay highest tribute to some of the hardest working people in America. I know of no other people who take such great financial risks, give more of themselves each and every day, and who do so with great discipline and dignity.

With the depression that is afflicting rural regions of our country, America needs a new declaration of economic independence, and that declaration should insist that America's farmers and ranchers are not expendable. Their husbandry and stewardship are central pillars of our national security and freedom.

Today, we are witnessing an alarming hollowing out of America's countryside and a wanton destruction of precious arable lands that have sustained us and on which future generations will depend.

Rural America is on life support. The current farm depression, now in its

fourth year, is the deepest since 1915. This year's prices were at a 27-year low.

The average age of our farmers is 57 years, and now they are getting over three-fourths of their earnings in public support because the market does not work for them.

And up until today, National Agriculture Day, what have we heard from the new administration? Silence. Not the peacefulness of the countryside, but the eerie solemnness of the graveyard.

President Bush, when he delivered his State of the Union address just a few weeks ago in this Chamber, had nothing to offer America's farmers. No plans. No solutions. No ideas. The budget that he has submitted so far suggests that agriculture's crisis will be taken care of out of something called a contingency fund. That sounds like it is tangential. Now, how exactly is that supposed to happen?

The President has talked largely about estate taxes, implying that farmers can leave their properties to sons and daughters. But what does that do to earn a living today and hold on for the rest of their productive years?

Anyone who saw the New York Times story this past weekend saw the heart-wrenching story about potato growers in Idaho facing their lowest prices in decades. They are worried about having an income. What will a tax cut do for them?

Then yesterday the President spoke on our Nation's energy policy. But, for agriculture, it was again the sound of silence. America has the ability to convert many of our crops into ethanol and biodiesel, throwing off the yoke of international fuel dependency. In fact, if we just converted our strategic petroleum reserve to a strategic fuels reserve and only fill 2 percent of it with biofuels, we would double the production of both ethanol and biodiesel in this country, helping to build that new industry from inside this Nation.

But the President did not mention it, not a word. But he did express his appreciation just yesterday to the OPEC ministers who agreed to hold price increases to only 7 percent for imported fuel. He thought that gesture by them was comforting. It is not comforting to me.

Mr. President, why do you not offer some comfort to America's farmers and ranchers and help them get their prices up the same 7 percent that you are willing to accept for oil? Why do you not help them develop new products like ethanol and biodiesel? Why do you not tell them what you propose to break them out of the cycle of dependency on government farm payments? Why do you not offer an agriculture policy that our farmers and ranchers can look toward the future?

Let me start in this way. America's farmers and ranchers need a new farm